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in this way, have in the end attained a less favorable standing than they would have acquired by a more honorable course.

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ART. V.—*Waverley Novels.*

*Waverley Novels; Revised and Corrected, with General Prefaces, and Notes, Historical and Illustrative, by the Author.* Boston. S. H. Parker. 12mo. 1829–1831.

The present century has no name in its annals of more enviable distinction than that of Walter Scott; the victories of Napoleon were not so wide, nor his monuments so likely to endure. The works of his fine imagination have not only found, but created readers in regions where nothing in the form of a book had ever found its way before. Many sagacious persons, like the countryman by the river-side, have been waiting for this tide of popularity to run by; so far from this, it seems to grow broader and deeper, and bids fair to disappoint all calculations founded upon the usual changes of taste and time. No better test can be given to try the excellence of a work of fancy, than a second reading; if the interest abate, alas for the writer's fame! It indicates a decline, which will go on from year to year, till the star, however brilliant in its season, will sink beneath the horizon, never to rise again. But if, on the contrary, new beauties appear, and the work is laid down the second time with an impression as deep if not as stirring as at first, the author's fame is secured. Our readers of mature age may apply this to the fame of writers much distinguished in their day. We can remember when the whole reading world shivered by reason of Mrs. Radcliffe's fearful mysteries; but a second reading, like the crowing of a cock, drove all her ghosts to their graves. When her gloomy procession had gone by, thousands of readers were surprised by the day-break, as they were devouring the Scottish Chiefs or Thaddeus of Warsaw; but a second reading served only to destroy all the charm of the first. This is true even of Miss Edgeworth in a measure; her Lord Oldborough, a character which undoubtedly made more impression than any other which she ever drew, will not bear a second reading; but her substantial merits have secured for her a desirable and lasting fame. Now, the excellence of Scott appears in the fact, that his writings not only bear, but require a second reading; without it, we cannot realize the

wealth of his imagination, nor the reach and majesty of his power.

The reputation of Scott is built upon his works of fancy. He has labored in other departments of literature with great vigor and success. His biographical sketches, particularly, have been distinguished by their manliness and candor, though, with the exception of Napoleon, they were written without much exertion of his strength. That great work has not satisfied the demands of the world, but we presume that no living writer could have given equal satisfaction; and the truth is, that the gigantic character he describes is still too near us to be painted; we must wait till the lights and shadows are blended into their right proportions by the effect of distance and time. There are those who are disposed to regret, that so great a character can be earned by one who, as they say, does nothing more than amuse the world, which they consider the highest aim and effect of Scott's imaginative writings; but let them vary their language a little,—let them call it giving happiness to the world,—and we hardly know how he could propose to himself a higher and happier end for the exertion of his splendid powers. We think that whatever makes men happier is apt to make them better; and the union of these two purposes being the glory of divine inspiration, we know not why human inspiration should be ashamed to follow the example. Let any one point out a work of Scott in which moral sentiment and character are perverted as in the mighty Corsair of Byron, or the paltry pick-pocket Paul Clifford, and we will take down his statue at once from the high niche in which it stands; but we cannot find in all Scott's writings a single page, nor a single character, in which shame is made glory, or glory shame, or in which any thing more is given to guilt, than the compassion united with aversion, which it ought always to inspire. We are confident, that if ever the mind can safely surrender itself to this enchantment, it is when the power is lodged in a conscientious hand like his.

It is too late in the day to question whether works of imagination can be safely read; read they certainly will be, and safely, by those who do not go to excess. Scott has done much to guard against this danger; for with one sweep of his pen he has sent to forgetfulness whole armies of novels, which used to prey upon the time and feelings of the young. It is true, that some, like Bulwer's, struggle up by dint of

brazen impudence, into a temporary notoriety, which we shall be compelled to blush for in a year or two, as for the Counsellor Phillips passion, which once prevailed in our land ; but this cannot be prevented ;—when a tree throws a thick and deep shadow over a landscape, such pestilent weeds are most apt to grow beneath it. In this case the good is direct, and the evil incidental. And how can any object, that his writings are not true ? There is such a thing as truth to nature as well as truth to fact, and it often happens that one must be observed at the expense of the other. Who ever thought of objecting to the parables of scripture, that they are not true ? If instruction, information, or suggestion, can be communicated in this way more directly and impressively than in any other, it is folly not to adopt it. The work of fiction in such a case is only an extended figure, which illustrates the truth and deepens its impression. But it is only necessary to say, that the good and bad effects of such works have been greatly overrated ; they affect us more like the action and imagery of a dream, than like the real experience of our lives ; though we allow, that it is quite possible to become intemperately attached to this as well as to music or any other fascinating art. Any extraordinary zeal against it reminds us of John Newton's description of the singers in torment, which Cowper says made him laugh '*de profundis*' in his deepest gloom.

We consider ourselves, then, as doing no injustice to the great name of Scott, when we speak of him in reference to his Waverley Novels ; or rather, we consider it but a proper tribute to one who has so delighted the world, to revive the recollections of our surprise and pleasure, when the bright visions of his imagination were first opened to our view. He has now thrown off his disguise, which was never more complete than that of a first rate actor dressed for his part, and easily known by his excellence, though his name is not in the play bill. Though there were some who, with remarkable folly, insisted upon ascribing these works to various persons, whose names were never heard of before, the world had sense enough to know, that they were written by a practised as well as an able hand. It does not readily appear, why Scott should have submitted to the inconvenience of this disguise, which every one saw through, after he had ascertained the success of his experiment upon the public taste ; for besides that it protected him from no criticism, it laid him under

the necessity of denying the authorship when the question was plainly proposed. This he claimed a perfect right to do, and we shall give no opinion on the subject, further than to say, that a secret so defended ought to be well worth keeping. In the case of Junius, there was something gained by a disguise; men wondered at the extent and accuracy of his information; while his familiar knowledge of the characters and designs of men in power, and the mystery in which he wrapped himself, made his attacks appear more like the fierce vengeance of an evil spirit than the helpless rage of man. There was a reason why Junius should have made the disguise, which he wore while living, serve as a winding-sheet when dead; because, even now, if the veil should be torn away, the name of the writer would labor under a reproach, from which his ability could not redeem it. In the case of Scott, there was nothing of the kind to be gained by the disguise, nor lost by the detection; and the reason of his wearing it probably was, that after first putting it on, for which he had sufficient cause, he never found a time when he could gracefully cast it away.

He was spared this trouble by the bankruptcy of his publishers, which of course placed any longer secrecy out of his power. This event subjected him to heavy losses; but perhaps it cannot be regarded as a misfortune; for few men can submit to severe mental exertion without the impulse of necessity, or equally powerful inducements pressing upon them in one form or another; and in this point of view nothing can be regarded as a calamity, which drives men to intellectual labor. At all events, his misfortune is gain to the world, and perhaps it is owing to this, that he still perseveres in a work which he would have abandoned long ago, if he could have been wrought upon by weariness of impertinent criticism, or by satiety of fame.

We propose to take some notice of various criticisms which have been made on these remarkable novels, and we may as well say in the outset, that we consider them as poems. Many, who remembered what a charm there was in the first hearing of the words, 'The feast was over in Branksome tower,' professed to be surprised that Scott, when his peculiar style was run down by imitators, could strike out a new path for himself, and walk in it with so much grace and power. But the truth was, that he did nothing more than throw off the incumbrances of rhyme, that being all of which his readers were weary, and the natural result was, that he took a wider range, and express-

ed himself with more ease and freedom. He was still every inch a poet, and his works were as much poems as ever ; his apprenticeship to his art, and the familiarity which practice bestows, were not lost ; his language was as poetical as before ; so that the whole change, instead of amounting to a Pythagorean transmigration, was nothing more than an alteration of dress. Though many seem hardly conscious of this fact, and various fine theories have been offered to explain, how he who succeeded so well in one department, could write so well in another, it has had an effect, which is even now more felt than seen. The moment the eminent poets of the day were convinced, that a mechanical arrangement of words was not essential to poetry, they rushed out with exultation from the circus to the broad highway. Southey, Campbell and Moore, tried their hands at prose-writing, and to many it seemed as if the whole poetical region was given over to desolation ; but it soon appeared, for the consolation of the lovers of the ‘ Nine,’ that whereas there is much prosaic verse in the world, there may be such a thing as poetical prose, of which Southey, Moore and Irving, have given sufficient examples. Scott is the author of this change, or rather, like other reformers, he has pointed out to the world what progress they had already made ; for assuredly, Jeremy Taylor and Isaac Walton were poets many years ago, though they never had written a line of verse. But this is better expressed by the Antiquary. ‘ A man may be a poet, without measuring spondees and dactyles, like the ancients, or clashing the ends of lines into rhyme, like the moderns ; as one may be an architect, though unable to labor like a stone-mason. Dost think Palladio or Vitruvius ever carried a hod ?’

These novels, then, are to be regarded as poems ; they have a right to the same immunities and exemptions, and are to be tried by the same laws. Their lineal descent may be easily traced from the romances of which Mr. Ellis has given so many specimens. It is not a little surprising, that so many objections should have been made to the historical form. So lately as the last year, a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* repeats the suggestion, that the fancy is only embarrassed by maintaining this connexion between fact and fable ; and seems to think, that such works would do better without the support of history. He even refers to the historical portraits which Scott has drawn, for evidence of the truth of his assertion. But

most readers, we apprehend, will agree with us, that his adventurous and successful execution of a work so difficult, is one of the best proofs of his power, and gives an interest and charm to his writings, which mere fiction could not possess. The critic speaks of Charles Edward, compared with the Baron or Fergus; there to be sure, the Chevalier must have been over-drawn, in order to inspire interest, because his personal character was deficient in attraction. But Claverhouse, Richard, Mary and Elizabeth, all full length portraits, in which the poet, more by suggestion than enumeration, has contrived to embody all the many and various impressions of their originals, which prevail in history or imagination;—originals, too, of which every one had already a distinct idea existing in his mind, with which the new painting must agree, or be pronounced no likeness,—all these, not to speak of the inimitable James in Nigel, form a gallery of more value, than any historians, or all put together, have drawn. And we may estimate the ability with which he has removed our old impressions, and supplanted them by his own, without breaking in upon our associations, by comparing these with the attempts made by such writers as Horace Smith; or the Pelham manufacturer, attempting to raise Dr. Johnson, and seeming as much at ease as if the awful original stood before him. Both appear in as much perplexity and dismay as the witch of Endor, if the belief be true, that while she intended only an imposture, a real ghost came up from the dead. In this respect, Scott has but one rival, and if he be not inclined, as we presume he is, to yield the prize to Shakspeare, they must, as historial portrait-painters, divide the crown.

Moreover, there is an advantage in attaching the romantic narrative to real events, scenes and places; there is an air of truth about representations of real things, which mere fancy-pieces never did and never can possess. We have no doubt that the *Iliad* would have been set down as pure fiction, were it not for its local descriptions; and Virgil, who knew how to turn a good example to the best account, is as minute as Malte-Brun, in fixing a sufficient number of land and sea-marks on his hero's way. Traditions cling to the place where they were born; to remove or dislodge them, is like the attempt to transplant the palm-tree; the imagination cannot bear any thing Utopian in its favorite descriptions; in proportion to the reality of its visions, is the desire to attach them to some peculiar

spot ; and since fortunately we can stand in fancy, as well as by travelling, on the plain of Marathon or the ruins of Iona, we are pleased to have the writer anchor his imagination to some real scene, even though it be one that we never saw. Scott was also fully aware, that truth and fiction might ally themselves with mutual advantage ; while his real landscape has made us feel confidence in the reality of his persons and actions, it is equally true that the fiction has given a charm to the rocks and mountains of his native land, which will last till the mountains sink and the torrents cease to flow. It is no small distinction thus to patronize his native land, and to cast the light of his own glory on every city, castle and tower, from the Solway to the Shetland isles. A hundred years ago, the Highlands of Scotland were as little known as the Rocky Mountains, but his pen has thrown them open as completely as a thousand military roads, and travellers will wander over them in all generations to come. Like the dying Fergus, he has remembered the blue hills of his country, and they in return shall long remember him.

The historical romance, then, in our opinion, is the best form of the novel ; and no serious objection can be made to it, except its difficulty, which though an objection to writers in general, is a recommendation to a man of genius ; a word which we use for acquired as well as original power. If a weak hand undertake to manage this mighty enginery, it soon finds that it would have done better if it had measured its strength, and taken subjects to which it was equal ; but an able hand controls it with easy and gigantic strength, and then the triumph is complete. We speak of acquired power, because it is perfectly evident that mere talent would be but a slender preparation for such a various adventure. Beside inventive faculties of the highest order, the poet must have a pervading and collected good sense, which knows how to give all subjects, and the parts of all subjects, their right place and proportion ; he must be familiar with life as it is at present, and as it was in past ages ; he must be as familiar with history, as with his own table—in the spirit as well as the letter ; he must be familiar with the arts of life and the arts of death, known in ancient times ; rivalling Meyrick in his knowledge of ancient armor, and Dugdale in his monastic learning ; with these, and a hundred other preparations, he must have a strength that smiles under its heaviest burthen, and a humor that plays over all, like the sun-beam on the sea. There are



few, indeed, in whom these attributes are found, and we do not believe that Scott could have possessed as many as he does, had he not devoted the first and best years of his mature life, to preparation, contented to wait for his harvest till life should come near its close. Like Cromwell, he began late, and therefore, like that most fortunate of all usurpers, he seems likely to die in full possession of his power.

The standing objection to Scott's novels, is their want of a story consistent in all its parts ; as if plots were found in nature ; as if taking any passage from the history of common life, we should find all its circumstances tending to one conclusion. We have certain traditional notions of the unity required in a poem or novel, which are regularly insisted on by critics, and as often disregarded by every successful writer. In a play such unity may make the representation easier, and aid the dramatic effect ; but even this seems not to be true with respect to Shakspeare ; at any rate, it is a matter of choice with writers, whether they shall enslave themselves to the classical forms or not, and then success alone can determine, whether they do wisely to observe or break them. In *Old Mortality*, Scott, like Shakspeare in the *Winter's Tale*, leaps over a number of years ; for this the critics reprove him, and tell him that it would have been better to bring the narrative sooner to a close, or to give the annals of the lost years. He, however, is of a different opinion, and in such a case, his opinion is at least as good as theirs. These defects are of the kind that suggest themselves to the examining critic, and not to the interested reader ; and provided his readers are satisfied, we presume that he is not much oppressed by the critic's displeasure. By putting together several admissions and disclosures in this late edition, we gather a curious piece of literary history, and have no doubt, that our conjecture is true. When *Guy Mannering* appeared, it was reviewed in the *Quarterly* in the flippant and ungracious style, which was commonly reserved for American subjects. In 1817, a review of *Old Mortality* followed, in which allusions were made to the first, as if it were hardly just, but with a salvo for the infallibility of reviewers. This last article brought forward the passages of history on which some of his scenes and characters were founded ; and it now appears, that the reviewer, Mr. Erskine, derived this information from Scott himself, who doubtless saw the paper ; for no friend to the author would have published criticism so severe, without

his permission, and no author would have borne it, who felt insecure of the public favor. This article contains most of the literary censures which have been thrown upon the novelist; want of story and connexion among the rest; and thus it appears, that Scott, by connivance if not direct agency, has supplied the critics with most of their charges against himself. The reviewer has shown some art in assuming the harsh and crabbed manner which once distinguished the *Quarterly*;—we say once, because justice requires us to say of both the great British Reviews, that they have gained in moral loveliness what they have lost in intellectual power.

Beside the loose construction of his stories, it is objected to him, that his heroes are inefficient and uninteresting. That they are uninteresting, every reader will testify, is not true; they are certainly less marked and striking than other characters in the novel, but if this be charged upon him as a fault, then, as Johnson finely says, there is an appeal open from criticism to nature. The name *hero* usually indicates the lover of the story, and it has come down to us from the times, when want of physical force and military success was want of every thing. But in the course of ages it has been discovered, that other less brilliant qualities are quite as likely to secure the happiness of social and domestic life; and to have slain two hundred Philistines, would not be a passport to the favor of the fair of the present day. Still this impression, which is almost obliterated among the Sioux and Pawnees, and has been forgotten for centuries in every civilized land, is insisted upon as a rule essential to the interest of every perfect poem. If the hero must concentrate in his own person all the interest of the story, Achilles is not the hero of the *Iliad*, nor Æneas of the poem which bears his name. The Baron of Bradwardine certainly attracts more attention than Waverley, and Balfour of Burley more than Morton; but it seems to us, that neither of those worthies would have figured to advantage in the character of a lover. Meg Merrilies and Dominie Sampson inspire more interest than Bertram and Julia Mannering; so that, according to this judicious criticism, the author had no alternative, but either to substitute the elder couple for the happy pair of the novel, or to cut down the peculiarities of those remarkable characters, so that they might not eclipse the younger. In short, lovers belong to ordinary life, and if an author binds himself to any such rule, he can only ring a new change on the low life

above stairs, which forms the staple of the novels regularly imported from England, and which are enough to make the angels weep, if any there be, which have charge of the taste or morals of our country.

We shall only mention one other special charge brought against the novelist—it is, that there is a sameness in his characters—one bears too much resemblance to another—thus, **Helen McGregor**, **Meg Merrilies**, and **Norna**, have been called, absurdly enough, copies from the same original, and other **Macedon** and **Monmouth** resemblances have been discovered, in which it has been thought that one portrait was taken with little alteration from the other. But the author draws from nature, and there is a sameness in nature. One mountain resembles another, one valley resembles another, and we should argue ill of the success of the painter, who should endeavor to represent a hill or vale unlike any that ever existed, or were ever painted before. So the varieties of feature in the human race cannot be very great either in face or mind; the innumerable shades of difference that we see, depend upon expression; and any hasty or unobservant eye, which does not notice this expression, will think that every man bears a wonderful resemblance to every other man. The more delicate touches which make up the expression of character, will wholly escape him. It is such observers, only, who have complained of the sameness of character in the *Waverley* novels; the author has faults, doubtless, but this is not one of them. His later works are received with less enthusiasm, than the first; but the reason is not, that he repeats, but that he does not repeat his characters and descriptions; for the earlier scenes of *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, and the *Antiquary*, came upon us with a freshness and a surprising charm, which the author could not from the nature of things, equal or renew, even if time had doubled his ability. We cannot live upon luxuries, without losing something of our passion for them; it is quite too hard to blame the author for the liberality with which he has dealt out his treasures, and so far as we can discover, the principal reason for complaining of his later works, is, that they are not the first.

Before we dismiss this part of our subject, we must say, that nothing seems more groundless than the charge that historical romances make us indifferent to real history. This is easily answered. The introduction of real history either helps the interest of the work, or it does not. If it do not, we are in-

different to real history already, and the novel will not make us more so ; if it do, history must have some charm of its own, which gives to the novel much of its attraction. The common impression seems to be, that fiction is the same with falsehood ; so far from this, we apprehend that there is more truth in Scott's *Old Mortality* or Shakspeare's *Richard III.* than in so many pages of Hume. The poets choose the fiction, as the form which will give the most exact representation of the events and manners of the time ; they adopt it for the sake of a nearer approach to truth ;—and thus a reader of *Waverley* will get a far more just idea of the Pretender's inroads in 1745, than a hundred such books as Home's *Rebellion* would afford him ; in fact all histories put together would not tell us half so much truth concerning the Highlands, a most curious and interesting subject, as we can gather in an hour from *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*. The scenes as well as the characters represent, not individuals, but classes, and therefore the fiction is less liable to error than history ; still the highest praise we claim for it is, that it furnishes colors to fill up the broad outline, which the exact historian has drawn. As for its making us indifferent to history, it seems to us that ignorance is the great cause of indifference in all things. Make a man acquainted with a subject, and his indifference ends ; he inevitably becomes interested, more or less, in one way or another ; and we believe, that thousands who have been struck with detached portions of history, as exhibited in Scott's magic lantern, have gone to the fountains of authentic information to learn more of what had so delighted them, and thus made themselves familiar with many chronicles, to which they had lived and died strangers but for him. But allow that the charge is true ; the novel is soon read—the novelist is mortal—we have evidence enough, that no living writer can make his place good, and in the natural course of things, it is not to be expected, that another of equal talent in the same department, shall rise for many generations. Then those who have read history in his writings, will be driven by their famine to the sources from which his information was drawn. The interest once excited, cannot easily go down ;—but when its luxuries fail, will content itself with a meaner supply.

Having thus answered as well as we are able, the objections to the form and character of these works, we shall not feel as if we were out of place in speaking of Scott's peculiar qualifi-

cations for this kind of writing ; a subject which has not been discussed in this Journal.

We should certainly mention his good sense as the most remarkable of the original elements of his intellectual character ; for, improved as it has been by experience and acquaintance with human nature, he must have inherited an unusual share. We mean the power of judging, balancing and comparing ; the power of fixing a steady eye, and giving a rapid decision upon the creations of his own genius ; the power of holding with a firm hand the reins of a quick imagination, which, uncontrolled or misguided, whirls away its possessor to destruction ; but rightly managed and governed, bears him on eagles' wings to the highest victories and glories of the mind. In the common walks of life this good sense is not uncommon, and appears in the easy confidence, with which its owner moves right onward to his object, where others hesitate and despair. But in the common walks of life there is not usually much imagination to control, and this good sense does not become a remarkable endowment, till we see its effect in ruling the fancies and passions of a gigantic mind. What such a mind will be without it, we see in Byron, whose passions, fired by imagination, were as wild and ungovernable as a rover's crew ; of itself it will not make a man great ; but no man can have any sure and lasting greatness without it ; and it is so apt to be wanting, that we do not esteem it too highly, when we call it the chief distinction of this great author's mind. In invention, he is generally thought to be wanting, and we suspect that here the common opinion would place Miss Edgeworth before him ; but without disparaging her admitted claims, we would suggest, that Homer and Virgil took advantage of national traditions ; Milton borrowed much of his subject from popular theology, though very little from the Scriptures. Shakspeare, as every one knows, made use of the penny tracts and novels of his day ; and if on this ground only we impeach Scott's character for invention, we must allow, that all these other great names have worn a glory not their own. The supply of materials is nothing without the power to use them. Supply two architects with marble, and while one will make a lime-kiln, the other will build a temple for the wonder of ages, lifting up a front, which harmonizes with the calm sky, as if it were sculptured from a bright evening cloud.

It is the good sense of this writer, which trims the lamp of

his imagination. Never was a fancy more fertile, various and brilliant ; but there is nothing fitful about it ; it spreads a steady and never-failing brightness all round, while his late rival, Byron, might have said of himself, like Mahomet : ‘ When the lightning flashes we go on by its light ; when it vanishes into darkness, we stand still.’ It is this union of sense and sensibility, which gives the charm to Scott’s other writings ; let his subject be Demonology, or what it may, he never plunges into profound discussion ; he always keeps far within the limits of his power, and writes as if sensible remark, lively fancy, and playful humor were all that the subject required. Had he never written his poems or novels, he would have been thought too homely, and matter-of-fact for poetry ; and this proves that he brings to every subject, precisely that kind and degree of power, which it requires. This is the reason, why he is thought deficient in the inventive faculty, because men do not perceive, that as he was generally writing to illustrate some portion of history, the invention of character was more wanted than facts, which were every where furnished to his hand. A story requires no great consistency ; nothing can be more strange and wild than the romances, in which real life abounds ; but an invented character, to have the air of life, must be consistent in every part, and under all circumstances, into which it can be thrown ; and to describe it well, is one of the hardest enterprises of the mind.

The character of Sir Walter Scott’s mind appears in his style, which though more careless in his later writings, is simple, expressive, and at times very eloquent in its flow. The style, where it is unborrowed, is always an index of the mind. The clearest minds express themselves most clearly ; and wherever we find a dim and hazy style, like that which is coveted by some writers of the day, in which common thoughts are paraded with an outline as vast and shadowy as Ossian’s ghosts, instead of puzzling over it as many do, believing that it must be very fine if one could discover its meaning, we take it for granted that the obscurity is in the writer’s mind, and that no light need be expected there. There are popular writers in prose and verse, who can express themselves with force and plainness in ordinary affairs ; but let philosophy or poetry be named, and, to use the words of the town clerk of Edinburgh, ‘ they are off and up in the air a hundred miles above common sense and comprehension.’ We regard it as one of the proofs

of Scott's ability, that he never subsides into this mysticism, or if he imagine unspeakable things, does not attempt to utter them. So far from such vain attempts, he generally keeps far within the ascertained limits of his strength, and thus gives the impression, particularly in his earlier poems, that however much the present effort may surprise the world, he is capable of far higher exertions. Compare Scott's style with that of the children of the mist, Coleridge for example, and it is easy to perceive, that the superior clearness is not merely in expression, but in the mind. The fate of the 'subtle doctor,' who, when he was old, wept, because he could not understand his own books, should be a warning to all such writers.

Scott's education, as well as his natural ability, qualified him admirably well for that enterprise, on which his fame is destined to rest. He describes his course of self-education in the studies of *Waverley*; these were about as systematic and self-denying, as what Peter Poundtext called his studies, viz. 'reading an ancient theological treatise, with a pipe in his mouth, and a small jug of ale beside him.' It seems, that he cast himself into the sea of books without any thing but his own pleasure to guide him. He was master of Milton and Shakspeare, of the old English dramatic authors, of the descriptive and striking passages of ancient chronicles, of all manner of voyages and travels, and all the portions of literature, likely to interest a luxurious and vagrant mind. But he was not confined to the resources of his own language; beside the classical authors required by a liberal education, he was familiar with the treasures of chivalrous learning afforded by the Spanish and Italian, and the endless variety of French memoirs and romances. At the age of fifteen, he had the misfortune to break a blood-vessel, and as some compensation for a confinement and starvation of several weeks, he was permitted to read at pleasure all such works as a large circulating library supplied. Had he not possessed the good sense of which we have spoken, such early excesses would have enervated his mind; they would have entirely unfitted most men for success in literature or any profession, which requires any concentration of the intellectual powers; but with him the case was different; and to this miscellaneous reading is it owing, that he has now an anecdote or illustration at hand on all occasions. To others, such treasures would be like the rubbish of the antiquary's collections; but with him, nothing is lost;

he finds a way to convert them all into materials for the use of his mind.

With a mind thus fitted to throw a romantic coloring upon every thing, the time of Scott's youth was eminently suited to cherish his peculiar taste. Children with this disposition take pleasure in listening to narrative old age; and it so happened, that the veterans of the day were those who had been out in the 'Forty-five,' as it was called, when the Scotch, with a generous self-devotion, however mistaken the cause, made a last effort to replace their own Stuarts on the British throne. It is true, the exiled family were wholly unworthy of this attachment; but there was nothing in the characters of the Brunswick line, which could tend, by contrast, to throw them into deeper shadow; and believing, as the Highland Chieftains did, that the Stuarts were wronged, their loyalty rose into a noble feeling. We can all remember the deep interest with which we thought of the exiled Bourbon race, till they and their allies contrived to change the sympathy of the world into scorn; and may be able therefore to form some idea of the attachment of the Scotch to an unfortunate royal line, which sprang from the bosom of their own country. We learn from Scott himself, that he took every opportunity of gathering these traditions, from the actors in those scenes, or their children; and though his prejudices were all in favor of the Protestant succession, his soul must have been on fire at the recital of the brutal revenge inflicted on his native land by Cumberland, after the battle of Culloden, and William, of 'glorious and immortal memory,' at the massacre of Glencoe. The effect of this youthful influence is easily seen in his works; his politics lead him in one direction, and his sympathies in another. He is not willing to declare Mary Stuart a murderess upon the testimony of men, who united the profession of saints with the malice and cunning of evil spirits; and applies to her case the maxim of the law, which presumes her innocent, or rather reserves his judgment till she is proved guilty, which she never yet has been. He defends the memory of the unfortunate Chevalier against disappointed friends and illiberal foes, and does not think it necessary to paint him as unworthy in his youth, because desperation afterwards drove him into debasing crimes. Thus prepared to be impressed by tradition, the history of his country, from early ages down to his own time, was full of inspiration; and as Old Mortality restored the moss-



grown inscriptions on the tombs, he has engraven with ‘an iron pen in the rock forever’ the triumphs and sorrows of his native land. In truth, we do not know where he could have found a region more suited to his taste and talent than the Highlands. When he was young, the civil storms had just swept away the clouds which had covered them for ages, and made them a mystery even to those who dwelt in the Lowlands at their feet. To the painter, was disclosed scenery of unequalled wildness and grandeur; to the poet, a display of character equally wild and imposing; while the philosophical observer found there a social system so different from any thing modern, that to climb a few miles from the plain to the mountains, was like passing over ten centuries of time. There were gloomy and ferocious, or chivalrous and accomplished chieftains; vassals at war with all the world, except their own clan, and so faithful to each other, that ‘the bands grew the tighter, the more they were wet’ with blood. It seemed like a new world revealed on purpose for him to conquer; and if the maxim of the law with respect to right to property be true, he has made the whole realm of Scotland his own.

His natural good sense was enough of itself to save him from being misled in his judgments by romantic associations, but it was aided by the habits of his early life. Though descended from a family of distinguished name, he was not born to wealth, but was obliged to depend for advancement on his own exertions. He was compelled to begin the usual course of a pains-taking lawyer. Had his romantic enthusiasm been too strong, this would have been abundantly sufficient to tame it; and it gave him an acquaintance with human character and the business of life, without which he never could have written his novels; without which he would have made his Fergus like Miss Porter’s Wallace; without which he would have made his heroes all virtue, and his villains all evil. Moreover, his acquaintance with the mysteries of the law has been turned to the happiest account in his novels; without it he could have drawn neither Pleydell nor Saddletree. That he never has been enslaved to it, may be seen from the many instances of good-natured satire upon its statutes and provisions, which will doubtless do more than so many motions in Parliament to produce reform. Such is the allusion in the Antiquary to the subject of imprisonment for debt, ‘the fugie-warrants ye ken,’ and the exultation expressed by the landlord in the same work :

“It’s a beautiful thing to see how lang and carefully justice is considered in this country.’ His situation in Edinburgh in early life, made him acquainted with the distinguished men who were then the boast of Scotland, and among the rest with Burns, then in the blaze of his fame, and to appearance distant from the disastrous eclipse in which he at last went down. Little did he anticipate, that the boy who gazed upon him with respectful interest, was afterwards to be a shining light, beside which all others should grow dim.

The character which was thus formed by nature, circumstances, and education, was admirably suited to the work in which he was afterwards to engage. There was not a particle of bitterness in his whole composition; but though a sly and sharp observer of men, seeing through their weaknesses with an almost unerring eye, he always looked upon the bright side when it was possible, and thus was a gainer in accuracy as well as good feeling; for certain it is, that the most charitable judgment of others is apt to be most just. Being fully conscious of possessing a giant’s strength, he felt no temptation to use it like a giant; and thus was entirely free from those jealous passions, which make a literary life a life of warfare. He was also free from that nervous anxiety for the success of his productions, which often induces authors to correct and alter their works, till they have lost their peculiar beauties; of which we have an instance in Mrs. Hemans’s fine lines on the death of Fergus, and Campbell’s *Lochiel’s Warning*. Without any ambition of wit, like Sheridan’s, for example, which is often as ungentle and surprising as an electric shock, and which carries more blood-stain than brightness on its edge, Scott has the easy and delightful humor of a good-natured man; it reminds us of the archness of unlabored conversation; and no man can doubt that the same wit, which forms the attraction of his own table at home, lights up the great festival, which he spreads for all the nations. On the whole, as is often said of great men, he seems made for the times, and the enterprise in which he was to engage. This is not a romantic age; and the familiarity which he discovers with law, mercantile business, and the rule of three, has no doubt caused many to turn a moment from the Year-book and Ledger, who in all other cases treat the unprofitable art of poem-making, as the Scotch Presbyterians call it, with utter contempt and derision.

The works, by which he acquired his earliest popularity—a

favor which the enthusiasm for his novels hardly transcends—were writings of a kind unfitted for the display of humor; and their narrative being entirely romantic, excluded a large proportion of those characters, which he draws with most skill. Such characters as William of Deloraine, are but half revealed; and such as Robin Hood and the Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst—even such as Evan Dhu and the robber Bean Lean, though perfectly at home on romantic ground, could, for obvious reasons, have no place in such writings. Roderick Dhu and Lord Marmion might remain; but the poet was so fettered by the forms of his poem, that he could not possibly develope the character of the last, even so far as to show that his fraud and falsehood were perfectly consistent with his chivalrous character. In the novel, he writes without restraint, and tells all, or what is still better, allows his characters to tell all for themselves. He constantly seemed oppressed before, by the feeling that he was confined to a limited circle; he crowded much antiquarian information into his notes, which to many were as interesting as the poem; information, which in the novel can be wrought gracefully into the texture of the whole, instead of being trailed after it in court-dress fashion. It was to be expected, then, that after a time, those works would decline in public favor, as they did; not so much because the world grew weary of them, nor because they were travestied by a rabble of imitators, as because there was a general feeling that the employment was too youthful for a man of so much talent, and one in which he could not display to the world half the riches of his mind. No such objection could be made to the form of the novel. It will embrace all that man ever did, and all that man ever knew; nothing is above it nor beneath it; it includes with perfect ease and gracefulness all varieties of science, information, profession and character; and as it does not restrain or oppress the writer, it is not likely to change, except by improvement; an improvement which will appear, not so much in the form as in the taste, literature, and moral character of such productions.

Such a change has taken place already, and it is to Scott that we are indebted in part for the progress already made, though we would not forget Miss Edgeworth, whose well-deserved success, we are told, inspired Scott to finish *Waverley*, when the earliest part of the manuscript had been thrown aside for years. It seems to us, that both surpass such writers as

Fielding, as much in talent as in moral taste. The question is often asked, what rank will Scott take among our novelists, when time has set its seal upon the reputation of his works? We have no hesitation in saying, that he will stand as much above him in durable fame, as he now does in interest and attraction. Fielding, no doubt, was a great genius, and in this respect, even Scott perhaps is not before him; but native strength will go but little way in such an enterprise; and Fielding was wholly destitute of the refinement and general cultivation, which any large view of life requires. Certain aspects of human nature, can no doubt be seen in a London police-office and prison, or in the lanes and inns of that vast labyrinth of crime; but the very experience which fitted Fielding to describe these with such perfect truth and humor, not to say relish, rendered him utterly incapable of describing happy homes and hearts, or of giving any thing better than a misanthropic picture of a man. He rather describes England, than human life; his best sketches are those of individuals, not of classes; and like other painters of manners, he must give place to those who find their originals in human nature at large, rather than individual characters. We are not insensible to his grave humor; for in solemn irony, even Swift does not exceed him; nor are we sure that we do right to compare his works with those of Scott. This is a parallel like that between *Hudibras* and the *Orlando*. We are perfectly aware that Fielding was not what, with better principles and a happier destiny, he might have been; but whatever offence we may give to those who are always ready to say of every thing, 'the old is better,' we are quite resigned to the change of taste, which has removed *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* to the highest shelves. It is vain to plead the taste of the times for his indecency; we do not find it in all the works of that day, and if he thought proper thus to defile his pages, he has no one but himself to condemn. He is the suicide of his own fame.

Of Smollett, we should hardly speak in this connexion, except to express our delight that he did not carry into effect a purpose he had formed, of making his native land the scene of some of his fictitious stories. He would certainly have peopled it with strange inhabitants, and would have extracted sufficient amusement from the subject; but it would have been like *Sir Roger de Coverley*, in the hands of Steele; the fine simplicity which Scott and Burns have identified with the

Scotch dialect and character, would certainly have vanished under the coarse caricature of his pencil ; and by thus forestalling the field, he might have prevented Scott in a later day, from spreading over it a mantle of venerable and pleasing associations. In one respect, he might perhaps have done it more ample justice than Scott ; the latter, through respect to the reigning family, has passed much too lightly over the shameful cruelties committed by authority upon the Scotch nation, after their attempts to restore the Stuarts were put down ; and has paraded with too much exultation, one or two of those expressions of magnanimity on the part of the Brunswick line, toward their fallen rivals, which, inasmuch as they cost nothing, the victorious party can easily afford to spare. The Scotch had undoubtedly laid themselves open to punishment, but the infliction should have been that of a civilized government, not a savage horde, such as under the authority of the Duke of Cumberland, overran the land. It is but justice to the Stuarts, and their supporters, to show that the spirit of the established succession was little, if any better, than their own.

Of the early English novelists, Richardson deserves to be placed nearest to Scott. Most readers deny the justice of Dr. Johnson's criticism, when he places him before Fielding ; but Fielding has an advantage over him, in the unchangeableness of the low life and manners which he describes ; they continue the same from generation to generation ; no substantial change can take place in the fox-hunting squire, so long as the race endures ; and originals may even now be found, to test the truth of Fielding's descriptions. On the contrary, Richardson, though he dealt much more with the human heart and character than Fielding, was minutely accurate in describing dress and manners ; things which in the changes of time and fashion become so grotesque, that the bodily presence of Sir Charles Grandison, whose bow was a curvation of the spine, would not be more fatal to the pathetic and sentimental in real life, than he now is in the novel. Still, Richardson was even more than Scott the reformer of his day ; he waged war upon the majestic old romances, enormous folios, any one of which might have been the book with which Dr. Johnson felled his bookseller, Osborne ; and which, with their brazen clasps and dull red edging, held the same place on the drawing-room table, which a score of annuals now fill. They had an advantage over the present race of novels ; now, the reader is unpleasantly brought up by the

close of the book, a few hours after its interest begins, while the old romance would entertain him from day to day, and from year to year. It was no common power which encountered this heavy artillery, and silenced it forever.

It is really surprising, that the literature of Britain should have furnished so few novels, till a very recent time, when they have broken upon us in a deluge, as if the stream had been dammed for ages. There have been very few novelists by profession, nor can the deficiency be accounted for, by saying, that they wrote in the poetical form; for of epics, how few there are which have left even a name. The Vicar of Wakefield still stands foremost in popularity; Rasselas, though the sentiments are philosophically untrue as well as depressing, is still read. It will be observed, that these two very successful works were written by poets of the first order. Goldsmith was even more at home in verse than prose; and in both expressed himself with that simple eloquence, which goes directly to the heart. Johnson, though not commonly regarded in this light, was distinguished by the poetical character of his mind; much of the power of his argument depended on the bright light of his imagination. Unfortunately, his defect of sight prevented him from enjoying the grand and beautiful in nature, and his bodily infirmities made his fancy rise, except in short flights, with a heavy and flagging wing.

We have slightly alluded to the novelists who stood before the public at the time of Scott's appearance, and who, for a time, seemed to be breathless with amazement at the sight of the new phenomenon. Their satisfaction was not increased by the voices, which they heard from all sides, saying to them, like Sieyes to his associates, when Bonaparte came forward; 'Gentlemen, you have a master.' They retired with one consent from the field, and for a time, no one even attempted to gain a hearing; at length, some solitary voice was heard between the acts; and now, novels of all descriptions swarm upon the reading world. There are few, however, of the vast numbers constantly imported from England, likely to endure; our own country gives us a better supply. Of the British novels, published within the last few years, Cyril Thornton is by far the best; it is a work of real power; in Scotch character and Scotch humor, the writer may contend with the Author of *Waverley*, with his foot on his native soil, while the more pathetic parts make strong appeals to the heart. Were

it not for a case of seduction, which the author ascribes to his hero, we should have read it with unmingled pleasure, and we cannot easily account for its attracting so little attention.

One word to readers of the present day. There is a power in scenes and narratives, which implies no power in the writer; and certain writers, without industry or talent, are carrying on an extensive system of imposition. They go to lunatic asylums, and note in their tablets the ravings of the maniac in chains; they study the Newgate Calendar, or write down the confession of some atrocious malefactor; and with these genuine horrors, make a deep impression on the public mind. But the business is wholly mechanical; some paltry wax-work, representing a bloody and ghastly form, may make the strong man start, and women faint away, while the pencil of Michael Angelo could not produce an effect half so striking; but no one is so absurd, as to judge of a work of art from the shock which it gives; if equal judgment were shown in respect to novels, the public taste would no longer be insulted by works, in which such narratives as any veteran knave can furnish, are paraded as splendid specimens of invention and descriptive power.

The edition of Scott's novels, which we have undertaken to notice, is one which has received the final revision of the author; and he has taken advantage of it to communicate to the world the historical facts, on which the incidents and characters in his works are founded. We can well imagine that he did this with a sort of triumph; for it shows that he drew from nothing but the ocean-spring of his own imagination. A few notes relative to matters of fact, are acceptable enough as illustrations; but the traditions which he brings forward as containing the suggestions of such characters as Meg Merrilies, Madge Wildfire, and others, evidently would not help a poor fancy, and would do little more than embarrass a strong one. Altogether we think they might as well have been reserved; for such an air of vivid reality attaches to his descriptions, that we think of all his events and characters as if they had really existed. We are rather vexed at being told, on the best authority, that they are nothing more than life-like fictions; we almost say as Bentley did of Horace, 'Yea, if he were now here and swore it, I would not believe him.'

In *Waverley*, there is little taken from tradition, though the whole story, otherwise loosely constructed, is held together by

that thread of history which is known to all. The Chevalier is a historical character ; a young prince, who believed that his father had the same right to his kingdom that others have to their estates ; and who, if he had been told at the moment of invasion that the majority of the nation had a right, and were disposed to reject him, would have replied, that this question was the one to be decided. The author has painted the character of this young prince in bright colors, and the evidence of facts bears him out in so doing. It is not surprising that a dethroned and discrowned sovereign, or one who has seen that hope, which is brighter than a crown, deferred and destroyed, should fall into excesses in exile, poverty and humiliation, to which, in better days, he was a stranger. This was evidently the case with Charles Edward. In the days of *Waverley*, he was a brave and romantic young adventurer, who, so long as his prosperity lasted, possessed the attachment of all about him, but who, as usual, found enough to act the *hyæna* as soon as he was fallen. The evidence of Dr. King against him, is that of a disappointed partisan, who deserted his cause. If he were as spiritless and enervated as he is often represented, it seems difficult to account for his return to England in 1759, which seems to have been putting his head into the lion's mouth. Historians do not mention this last and most hopeless endeavor ; but Dr. King testifies, that Charles Edward actually visited London in disguise ; and we remember a conversation in Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*, in which a chieftain stated to Dr. Johnson, that the Chevalier was at that time in England. The romance of *Redgauntlet* is founded on this incident, which involved no serious consequences. We have no doubt, then, that Charles Edward, though afterwards miserably changed, was in youth what Scott describes him.

This is the character in which the novelist was aided by the history of the times, and it strikes every reader as precisely the one in which no such aid was needed. It might have been drawn by a very inferior hand. But the Baron of Bradwardine, with his pedantry and ancestral vanity, so oddly mingled with good sense, courage, and generous feeling ; Fergus, whose noble bearing on the memorable trial, makes us forget how fiery and unreasonable he had been ; Evan, whose attachment to his chieftain had become a part of his nature ; Baillie Macwheeble, who pauses in the moment of capture, to set down a 'sma' minute' to make matters sure ; the high-souled



and lovely Flora; the equally lovely and gentle Rose, are all creations of the author's genius. It seems to us, that the want of interest complained of in the character of Waverley, arises from its truth to nature. What more natural, than that one educated as he had been, should be acted upon by the force of circumstances? They know little of human nature, who think that such a character cannot have much that is high and manly to redeem its failings and errors.

Now it is not a little singular, that the Baron's returning into danger to rescue his Titus Livius, and the stratagem by which Janet Gellatly, when on trial for witchcraft, routed her judicial persecutors, and also the stratagem, by which Davie misled the soldiers, who were in pursuit of the Baron, all which circumstances would, especially the first, be pronounced the most unnatural in the book, are incidents, which actually happened. And no doubt many a narrative might be drawn to the letter from real life, which critics would pronounce decidedly unnatural, for the same reason which makes a French connoisseur think a tragedy of Addison more natural than Shakspeare's; because he has an idea of what nature requires firmly fixed in his mind, and compares every thing with this in preference to real life, thinking that if it be not nature, it is something better than nature.

The manner in which Waverley was written, will hereafter be quoted as a curious piece of literary history. Inspired, as he tells us, by the recollections and traditions of the 'Forty-five,' the author wrote, in 1805, about one third part of the first volume of Waverley. It was advertised to be published under the title of 'Waverley, or 'tis Fifty Years Since,' the latter part of the title having been afterwards altered. The author showed the manuscript to a friend, (it had then reached the seventh chapter,) whose opinion was unfavorable, and the work was thrown by into an old writing desk, where it lay forgotten till after his removal to Abbotsford in 1811. Afterwards the fame of Miss Edgeworth, and an ambition to render Scotland as interesting as she had made her own land, induced him to search for the unfinished manuscript, which was no where to be found, till one day, in looking for some fishing-tackle, it came to light in the old desk aforesaid, which had kept Horace's advice to the letter, for the work was published in 1814. Its progress was at first slow, and its fate was the same in this country, not from want of taste in the public to discover

its merits, but from want of a name in the title-page to induce them to read it. As soon as it gained a hearing, its success was brilliant; the gale of popular favor, which has not since changed, beat upon it in a perfect storm.

Guy Mannering followed *Waverley*, though with a considerable interval between; for it was not till the success of *Waverley* was certain, that the author was induced to try his fortune again. In this new attempt he did not lean upon history, as in the other; and the consequence has been, that, although incomparably beyond *Waverley* in its first impression, it is now generally thought inferior; because *Waverley* not only abounds in historical fact, but breathes the living spirit of the times it describes; while *Guy Mannering* describes nature and manners without reference to any particular age. Perhaps even now, any one reading these works for the first time, would give the preference to *Guy Mannering*; such is the rapid flow of the narrative, the dazzling variety of character, and the strong romantic interest attached to the scenes in which the gypsies appear. The author informs us, that he began with the intention of resting the interest of the story upon the accidental correctness of an astrological prediction. This accounts for the aspect of the earliest chapters. Happily he became aware of his mistake before he had gone too far, and now the astrology of the novel, without amounting to superstition, carries with it that slight degree of mystery, which recommends itself in an unaccountable manner to the most rational minds. It is now a story not far removed from ordinary life, and is remarkable for its containing the only decided failure of the author in his attempt to draw a heroine; such is the common opinion with respect to *Miss Mannering*, and it is a verdict in which we entirely agree.

When these works were in their height of interest and favor, various attempts were made to show the author's want of originality, and traditions were brought forward in several journals, from which it was said that the scenes and characters were drawn. It now appears that the formidable person who brought the author to justice was no other than himself; we have already mentioned the instance in the *Quarterly Review*. The appearance of *Guy Mannering* called forth another in *Blackwood's Magazine*. There it was stated, that the original of *Meg Merrilies* was a gypsy, named *Gordon*, a remarkable person, who resembled the fictitious character in her energy,

fidelity, and influence with her lawless tribe. The adventure of Dinmont with the robbers, and the part borne in it by Meg, were also historically true. In this last edition, we are told that Dominie Sampson was taken from one who was an original in every sense of the word ; a simple and faithful tutor, who supported his patron's daughter by his exertions, and treated her with the same affectionate respect, when her father's death had left her poor and dependent on him. We are glad of this, for the honor of human nature. The author also mentions sundry other personages, from whom his characters were taken, such as Yarskins, a Dutch smuggler ; stating by way of commentary, that he has been informed of this by creditable persons, though it was unknown to him till after the work appeared. The truth is, however, that these characters develop themselves in their conversation, which could not well have been copied from the living letter ; and with these few materials upon his hands, the author is like one to whom a subject is prescribed, somewhat more embarrassed than when left to choose his own.

We are told that the funeral scene described in the novel, has had the effect to produce a reform in Edinburgh, in respect to the decency of such transactions. The character of Dandie Dinmont was assigned by common consent to Mr. James Davidson of Hindlee, who besides the points of honesty, bluntness and hardihood, had a family of dogs whose generic names were Pepper and Mustard. An English lady of rank, wishing to possess some animals of this distinguished line, took the direct course of addressing a letter to Mr. Dinmont, with which direction it reached Mr. Davidson, who failed not to appropriate the name, and grant the request. Two of the dogs now reside in the family of the author, and it is to be hoped, express themselves grateful by their services, for the gift of immortality. These little incidents are interesting, and show how strong is the persuasion of the reality of the story ; the historian may bless his stars, who is able to leave half as distinct an impression of the truth of his narrative on the minds of his readers, though he gives chapter and verse for every fact which he records.

The Antiquary was the immediate successor of Guy Mannering, and like *Waverley*, was more slow in making its way into favor ; but not for the same reason. The readers of that work could not relish it at first, because the manners it de-

scribes were wholly new ; they made the same mistake with Waverley himself, when, from ignorance of the Highland manners, he took the haughty Fergus for the thief-taker of the district ; nor is it surprising that there was something fatal to all romance in the collectors of black-mail, and stealers of cattle ; when circumstances so slight are sufficient to quench all enthusiasm in common life, it is easy to account in this instance for the holding back of general applause. But the fate of the Antiquary, which from being the least popular, is now as a whole, the favorite work of the author, is embraced in the usual destiny of great productions in all the arts ; not less in music and painting than poetry ; a destiny which promises the more enduring fame, to that which is less relished at first. So well is this fact established and so generally known, that we at once apprehend, that there may be more finery than real excellence, in that which charms us at the first hearing. Works of genius require study and will bear it. Sir Joshua Reynolds tells us, that he was not struck with Raphael's paintings till after long study and attention, and such a taste, like that for olives, is likely to last, when that which pleased at once is forgotten.

In admitting the public behind the curtain, we learn with respect to the Antiquary, that the character of Oldbuck was taken from real life. The original was a friend of the author's youth, who resembled the Antiquary in learning, wit and quaintness of expression ; but excepting the scene with the owner of the stage-coach, nothing in the fiction bears any resemblance to the circumstances of the original. It seems that the likeness was striking enough to endanger the secret of the author ; for a person who knew this original and his intimacy with the family of Scott, declared himself satisfied, that he had discovered the Great Unknown. Edie the mendicant, is the representative of a class, and was drawn from two or three originals, each of whom had something in common with the beggar of the story. Beyond this it does not appear, that any thing was supplied by history or tradition. The common impression is, that Fairport represents Aberbrothick, where are still seen the ruins of an abbey of some note in the ancient history of Scotland ; but the author does not confirm this, and from his frankness in making all such admissions, we may infer, that it is not true. We believe that some regret is generally felt, that Miss Wardour was not more distinguished from other young ladies, and the false alarm at the close might have seemed a lame con-

clusion, had it not been borne out by many similar scenes in this country and Great Britain during the late war, when, as every one remembers, the mistake was ludicrous, but the excitement was sublime. There are one or two ill-managed scenes, and the German weighs somewhat heavily on many parts of the story ; but what must those faults be, which the aged Elspeth and the funeral at the cottage fail to redeem ?

In the preface to the *Antiquary* the author intimated, that his course was at an end, remembering probably, that his poetical works had declined in public favor, and wishing to halt in this new enterprise, before he should be troubled with indifference on the part of readers. But he must have soon discovered, that there was no such danger, and that there was no need of reasoning from one case to the other ; for if the time were ever to come, when the world would be weary of his productions, it was then as distant as any thing human could be. His purpose of silence must have been contingent, and he did wisely to break it, for no one of his works has fixed itself more strongly on the imagination than *Rob Roy*. This is partly owing to *Diana Vernon*, a bewitching vision, whose wildness, sense and beauty, inspired more interest for the time, than even *Flora Mac Ivor*. There were contrasts in her character fully accounted for by her situation, but romantic in the highest degree ; and similar contrasts made the ground-work of the novel. A Highland robber is brought into intimate union with the most homely and practical person who could be found in Glasgow ; those who proposed to drain *Loch Lomond* are within sight of the wildest aspects of nature and social life. The confusion is as striking as in *Mr. Stewart's* congregation at the *Sandwich islands*, where the fashionable coat of the day stood side by side with a faded revolutionary uniform, a ruffled shirt by a frame which never felt the want of such a blessing, and a lady of rank paraded in the latest style of *Broadway*, fully equipped with every luxury, excepting stockings and shoes.

Here, *Rob Roy*, who gives the name and much of the interest to the work, is, except as far as his conversation goes, entirely drawn from history ; and the same is true of his wife, whose wrongs and vengeance are not overstated ; the tradition is, that she stood by his bedside when he was dying, with an exhortation similar to that of the wife of *Job*, and received a still sharper reply. The real history of this person is given by

Nicol Jarvie in the novel with exactness, and about the right tone of moral feeling. The knavery of Highland rovers was looked upon in that day, with the same indulgence which is now accorded to that of statesmen, and it was not to be supposed, that a desperate and broken-hearted outlaw, would become a teacher of morality and reform. If circumstances be weighed and balanced, he was no more guilty than many a citizen who passes for conscientious, because he confines his operations to that wide reach of dishonesty, which lies within the limits of the law. But we would say nothing in defence of any doubtful character, and allowing the Highlander to be as bad as the most captious critics would make him, Scott has recommended him to our compassionate respect and not as our example. It is impossible (as many moralists would have us) to pronounce the same single sentence upon character, which we do upon persons; if a criminal be brought to the bar, some traits of generosity are not allowed to excuse him, because there is no such retribution as that which Zoroaster saw, where a foot was receiving its reward in Heaven for kicking food to a starving animal, while all the rest of the owner's person was suffering in the flames. But with respect to character, there are some traits which we abhor, and others which we venerate and love, and so long as we have to do with mixed characters, we must regard them with mixed feelings. We shall not, therefore, when we pronounce Byron an unprincipled libertine, forget that he was a mighty genius and unfortunate in his early influences, nor shall we do the same with respect to fictitious character; this wholesale condemnation is, no doubt, an easy process, but beside being unjust, it throws the sympathy of the world into the wrong direction; if the guilty be punished beyond reason, men inevitably take their part.

The next work with which the author astonished the world, was the 'Tales of my Landlord, taken down by Peter Pattison, and given to the public by Jedediah Cleishbotham, after the decease of the said Peter.' These introductions showed the unbounded resources of his fancy. Of themselves, they would exhaust the invention of an ordinary mind; and the novels themselves do not contain two characters better sustained, than the gentle and simple-hearted teacher, and his consequential superior and patron. The first of these tales is the Black Dwarf, the plan of which seems to have engaged the author,

without much consideration whether it was suited to a work intended to give pleasure. The original was David Richie, who, in person, and most points of character, is exactly described, but unlike the Dwarf, was humble and poor. He was bred a brush-maker in Edinburgh; but the painful notoriety which his appearance gave him, and the insulting gaze to which he was exposed, induced him to leave the city. He found, after removing to various places, that he could not escape persecution without withdrawing from society altogether. He then built a small hut on a wild moorland, and afterwards held as little communion as possible with the world. But he could not get rid of his jealousy and wounded spirit; and any slight smile or neglect in the chance visitors of his retreat, fired him at once into insanity. It was evident, that such a story might admit of much powerful writing; but pity and horror would be the feelings most naturally excited. Such a spectre would throw a gloom over the whole narrative, which no scenes of an opposite character could entirely do away. This is felt by every reader of the *Black Dwarf*; and we cannot but regret, that the author should have published it in its present unfinished form. It is so short, that the Dwarf casts his shadow entirely over it; and in his character we find too little of the love of nature, which did much to soften the feelings of the original. The history is too interesting to be omitted. It seems that this attachment to the loveliness of nature sprang up in his heart like the diamond of the desert; he found friends in the silent objects about him, which, without speech or language, breathed consolation to his desolate spirit, when man had almost driven him to despair.

The author was induced to crowd into one volume a story which was meant to occupy two, by the advice of a friend, who assured him that the idea of the Dwarf was of a kind too revolting for the purposes of a novel. This was true, but the difficulty was only increased by hastening to its conclusion, and the better course would have been, either to have carried out the original plan, or not have published it at all. But when a work has become distasteful to a writer, it is hard to go on and complete it,—perhaps impossible for him to do it justice, unless he writes with all his heart; so that if some other course had been preferable, he probably took the only one which was left him; and we confess, that we should have been sorry to lose the domestic scenes of the *Elliotts*, though the work as a whole leaves a melancholy impression.

Fortunately for the Black Dwarf, it was leagued with the story of *Old Mortality*, and was forgotten in the success of the latter. The name is not descriptive of a single character or circumstance in the novel ; but it was borne by a person who is exactly described in the introduction to the work,—a harmless enthusiast, whose mind had been unhinged by enthusiasm in early life,—who, like David Deans, could not sit down contented with the ‘carnal self-seeking times,’ which had followed the days of persecution and martyrdom. The only employment that suited his sorrowing spirit, was that of travelling through Scotland, with his chisel and hammer, to build, burnish, or repair, the sepulchres of the Cameronian righteous, whose memory had passed away, like the smoke of engagement from the field of blood. Scott himself saw and conversed with this person, whose name was Robert Patterson. He died in 1801, leaving three sons, one of whom came over to Baltimore in 1776.

In this work the author is indebted to history for the main incidents with which the fiction is interwoven, such as the actions of Bothwell bridge and Loudon hill, and above all for the character of Claverhouse, which is evidently a favorite with him, and whether in history or the fiction, is a most singular specimen of human nature. No one denies, that he was brave, and at times generous, with something lofty in his ambition, which contrasted strangely enough with the savage fidelity with which he discharged a trust, that would have been more properly delegated to an executioner than to a cavalier and man of honor. He was beautiful almost to effeminacy in his person, graceful and courtly in his manners, but one of the most ferocious leaders that ever thundered in the front of war. With him is contrasted another historical personage, Balfour of Burley, a ruffian who made use of one shred of religious enthusiasm to cover a thousand sins. Both these characters, with all their seeming inconsistency, are true to fact ; were it not so, critics would have long ago set them down as the most extravagant and unnatural the author’s pencil ever drew. A descendant of the latter has undertaken to defend his ancestor ; but where the deeds are such as can neither be denied nor defended, the advocate may as well be still.

Most of the fanatics of the novel represent a class, and those who feel an interest in the annals of that day, are indebted to Scott for presenting them in a living and breathing form. Much



fault has been found with the author for holding up the Cameronians to abhorrence and derision ; but we know of no beings who ever deserved it more than a great proportion of their number. We honor their piety and self-devotion ; we respect the firmness with which they maintained their rights and principles ; but when enthusiasm rises to excess, it stands upon the verge of imposture, and it is wholly impossible to believe, that all, even of that which passed the furnace, was gold. We have no doubt that the author has given them credit for all they deserve, both of good and evil, though nothing which contains an admission of their infirmities can be expected to satisfy those who look upon them as saints and martyrs. There is a certain point to which we can believe that mistaken zeal may go in all sincerity ; but when it begins to cry out for persecution and thirst for blood, we more than suspect, that without the enthusiast being conscious of it, his earthly passions are rising, and his religious feeling dying away. We do not believe that pure enthusiasm can lead a man to suppose himself released from the command ‘thou shalt not kill ;’ yet the friendly historian of the Covenanters says, that Mr. Hamilton commanded at Drumclog, and ‘some, contrary to his express command,’ gave quarter to their enemies, and let them go. ‘This greatly grieved Mr. Hamilton, when he saw Babel’s brats spared, after that the Lord had delivered them into their hands, that they might dash them against the stones.’ The same wretch put to death a prisoner with his own hand in cold blood, and speaking of it some time afterwards said, ‘I bless the Lord for it unto this day.’ Verily, such feelings are like the white ants of the West Indies, which eat into the wooden frame of houses, and as fast as they consume it, fill up the cavity with stone.

Beyond this the author is not indebted to history, though the spirit of history breathes through it all. Lauderdale indeed is described in the memoirs of those times, but the author might have invented a character for the purpose with less trouble. Serjeant Bothwell really existed—a descendant of the noble family of that name, whose habits had reduced him to the condition of a common soldier ; but the fiction has borrowed from the original nothing but his name. The tower of Tillietudlem is imaginary, but somewhat resembles the ruins of Craignethan castle. The greatest objection to this work is the close, when Lord Evandale, who has interested the reader so much throughout by his generosity, is so suddenly murdered ;

but estimable characters in real life are often removed quite as suddenly ; and no one says that it is not according to nature. The charm, however, does not depend on the consistency of the narrative, but the characteristic conversations, and the rich display of portraits, representing the spirit and manners of the times. The simple and kind old lady, who had entertained his Most Sacred Majesty in her tower,—the brave old Major, beginning to fight his battles over again under the touch of years,—the admirable Cuddie and his mither,—the miser Milnwood and his house-keeper Mistress Wilson,—the widow who sat in her red cloak by the road, and the little girl who guides Morton to the Black Linn, are so perfect in their kind, that the reader must be difficult to please, who can stop to criticise one or two faults in the story. Nothing has been more remarkable, and we dare say more gratifying to the author, than the obstinacy with which his readers insisted on being pleased, when critics made it as clear as the day that all was wrong. Faults were pointed out in vain ; still the readers kept on, like the English at Waterloo, not knowing when they were beaten. We can imagine that some other conclusion of the story would have been more agreeable to our feelings ; but after all, the effect of the work is the test ; this has been recorded, and now it cannot be altered.

The information now for the first time communicated by the author, with respect to the Heart of Mid Lothian, is full of interest. It is honorable to the public, as well as the writer, that a heroine in humble life, without education, beauty, or romantic feeling, and admired, if at all, for her energetic virtue alone, should have acquired more extensive popularity than any other of the wonderful images which have passed before the public eye. The original was named Helen Walker, and the facts were communicated in a letter to the author while he was yet unknown, by a Mrs. Goldie. She stated that she had met this person twenty-six years before in a place a few miles from Dumfries. She was then an old woman, rather stout in form, with eyes remarkably bright and expressive, living in a very humble way, but looked upon by the neighbors as reserved and proud, because unwilling to speak of the circumstances which had brought dishonor on her name. In 1736, the time described in the novel, her sister Isabella was condemned to die for the same crime with Effie Deans. Helen was called upon to give evidence in court in the same manner with Jeanie

Deans, and, like her, stated to the counsel that she could not swear to a falsehood. The same day Helen procured a petition stating the circumstances, and the same night set out on foot for London. As in *Madame Cottin's Elizabeth*, the difficulties she encountered are understated in the fiction; for without introduction of any kind, she presented herself to the Duke of Argyle, and having by his means procured a pardon, returned with it on foot in time to save her sister. Isabella afterwards married her seducer. This is one of the cases in which truth puts imagination to shame. The whole world has rung with the reply of Ledyard, when asked how soon he would proceed to Africa; but here was energy and enterprise infinitely beyond it. Helen died in 1791, and was buried in the church-yard of Irongray; the daughter of Mrs. Goldie wished to place a monument on her grave, with an inscription by Sir Walter Scott; he anticipated her wishes; but brass and marble are too frail to bear the record of such deeds; he had raised a monument already, which will endure till the last eye that can read it is closed in death.

The history of the Porteous mob might be transferred to a history of Edinburgh, almost without alteration. The account of Robertson's deliverance is given as it actually happened. A singular mystery still hangs over this transaction, which reminds one in some respects, of the destruction of the tea in Boston harbor. Scott thought himself at one time in a fair way of tracing out some of the actors, but the clue failed, and all again was dark as ever. We should infer from the accounts of the transaction, that the whole population of the city was accessory, either by direct agency or encouragement; so long as penalties hung over them none would dare to confess their own share in it, nor would the popular feeling allow any one to inform against another. When all the actors in the conspiracy were dead, their children, who had not been wrought upon by the same passions, must have viewed the matter in a different light, and it may readily be supposed, that they would not wish to make such an affair conspicuous in the memory of their fathers. In this way matters are often concealed from history, which are known to thousands.

The Maniac was suggested by a harmless person, known by the name of Feckless Fanny; but in order to avoid a resemblance to Sterne's Maria, into which the original would have led him, he altered it so much, that no traces of the first con-

ception remain. The Tolbooth, which makes such a distinguished figure in the novel, was removed in 1817, and on that occasion, the gateway and door of the ancient prison were presented to Sir Walter Scott. They now form the entrance of the kitchen-court at Abbotsford.

There have been objections made to this work, and one is, as our papers say of the news, highly important if true. It is, that the moral effect is not good ; the villain who caused all the misery of the story, and the unfortunate victim of his seduction, are transferred to a station in which they enjoy whatever wealth, rank and fashion can give. This is not the fact ; they are not represented as enjoying any thing, but as leading a life made wretched by mutual reproach and self-upbraiding ; while their rank is but the ‘gilding of their woe,’ and the author makes it sufficiently evident that none can enjoy it without health at heart. But it would have been easy to alter all this. By a single dash of his pen, the author could have brought them to justice ; but he knew better, and has acted upon the principle that a writer gives the right aspect to vice, when he represents it as destroying the peace beyond the power of riches and honors to repair it ; and the right reward to virtue, when he secures for it the universal applause of men.

At some future time we may resume the subject, and if we do nothing more, may save some readers the trouble of picking out the information which Scott has given with respect to the materials which have suggested his scenes and characters. All such information only shows how little he needs to borrow, or rather how much he overpays ; for whenever he takes a scene from history, he repairs its faded colors, sets it in a proper light, and gives it a force and reality which it never had before.

For this reason, among others, we are glad to see this edition. Such works should be in a cheap and accessible form ; families may read them with instruction as well as pleasure ; we lament the want of discrimination amounting to folly, which sets down all works that bear the name of novels as if they came under the same description, and warns us against reading novels as if they were not as various in moral and intellectual character as all other productions of the mind. There are novels which have an extensive circulation among us, and are not a little admired by the very young, which are vile as respects moral sentiment, and contemptible in their literary

pretensions; those who degrade Scott to the level of such writers not only libel him, but they injure the cause which they profess to have at heart; for some novels will be read, and if they tell their children that such works are all alike, their children will be as likely to choose the worse as the better, believing that equal injustice is done to all by such sweeping condemnation. Such remarks as these may seem out of date in the nineteenth century; but less than half a dozen years ago, a divine of respectable character and great influence lifted up his voice in warning against novels at large, while he allowed other poems to retain the place of which it seemed hopeless to deprive them. It is hard to say which were the most marvellous, his prohibitions or exemptions; to us it seems better to discriminate; this legal process *castigat auditque* seems better calculated for the region to which Virgil confines it, than for ours. It is like the French revolutionary practice of taking off the prisoner, and investigating the merits of his sentence at the next convenient time.

One thing we would suggest to all concerned in publishing future editions of these novels. Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the prints which they afford us. When we see a sketch of a scene, which has impressed itself on our minds like those of Shakspeare and Scott, we are sure to be disappointed; for, however good in itself, it is not what we expected and wished to see. Let any one look at the prints of Nicol Jarvie with his red-hot coulter, or Duncan of Knockdunder at the table, and he will feel that such attempts are provoking; these poor efforts to represent the scene, only serve to disturb our vivid imaginations. Any one who wishes to illustrate these novels, should give representations of the scenes described in them; the sketch of the Grass-market in this edition, is worth all the rest of the prints put together; it is not every one who can visit Rob Roy's cave, and millions would be grateful to any artist who should furnish such views, to give compactness and unity in their minds to the author's local descriptions.